

VZCZCXRO6242
OO RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHBJ #7352/01 1081030
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 181030Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3303
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0267
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0761
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0988
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0895

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 007352

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [CH](#) [IR](#)

SUBJECT: APRIL 18 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: AFM CUI TO IRAN,
SIX-PARTY TALKS, TAIWAN, EAST CHINA SEA DISPUTE, SUDAN

Summary

11. Key points made at the April 18 MFA press briefing are as follows:

- During his recent trip to Iran, AFM Cui Tiankai expressed China's concern over recent developments concerning Iran's nuclear program.
- The "principal parties" to the Six-Party Talks should demonstrate their sincerity in order to achieve progress and implement the Joint Statement.
- Taiwan is the "most important and sensitive core issue" in U.S.-China relations and cannot be marginalized.
- The notice placed on the China Maritime Safety Administration website regarding China's Pinghu gas field operations contained a "technical inaccuracy," but China objects to Japan's exaggeration of the issue.
- China blocked UN sanctions related to Darfur because it wishes to promote a negotiated solution, which it hopes will happen by the end of April.
- While the SCO maintains an open attitude toward expanding its membership, it is presently focused on internal development and strengthening cooperation among its current members.
- Finnish Prime Minister Vanhanen will visit China April 25-28. Vice President of Sierra Leone Berewa will visit China April 23-27. End Summary.

AFM Cui's Iran Visit

12. Responding to questions during the regular April 18 MFA press briefing on Assistant Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai's recent visit to Iran, MFA Spokesperson Qin Gang noted that AFM Cui met with a number of Iranian officials, including Supreme National Security Council Secretary Larijani and Deputy Secretary Vaheedi. AFM Cui voiced China's concern over recent developments concerning Iran's nuclear program. He expressed the hope that all the parties will exercise restraint and will continue negotiations in order to create conditions for a proper resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue.

China's "Constructive Role" in the Six-Party Talks

13. Asked about reported recent statements by Deputy Secretary Zoellick on China's role in the Six-Party

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Talks, Qin asserted that Beijing has consistently played a constructive role in the Talks process. China strongly advocates a nuclear weapon-free Korean Peninsula and a peaceful resolution to the DPRK nuclear issue, which are goals that serve all the parties' interests and regional peace and stability. Beijing has made widely recognized efforts to promote the Talks process and will maintain contact with all the parties, both inside and outside the Six-Party Talks framework. The Six-Party Talks are currently encountering complications, and the 'principal parties' in particular should demonstrate their sincerity in order to achieve progress and implement the Joint Statement reached during the last round of the Talks.

President Hu's U.S. Visit and Taiwan, Human Rights

14. Asked by the Taiwan Central News Agency correspondent where Taiwan ranks on President Hu Jintao's agenda for his U.S. visit, Qin underscored that Taiwan is the 'most important and sensitive core issue' in U.S.-China relations. This issue cannot be marginalized, he stressed. President Hu and U.S. leaders will discuss ways to develop bilateral relations and exchange views on major international and regional issues. Beijing hopes Washington will

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honor its commitments to its one-China policy, the Three Joint Communiqués and opposition to Taiwan independence, as well as work with China to maintain cross-Straits peace and stability and regional development. Such actions serve all the parties' interests.

15. Asked by the Kyodo correspondent how President Hu will portray China's human rights situation to U.S. leaders, Qin remarked that China supports countries in developing their human rights based on their particular backgrounds and conditions, adding that it is natural for nations to have different human rights practices. China and the United States are making efforts to promote human rights, and the two countries, as well as other nations, should conduct dialogue in this area. Beijing opposes confrontation and the use of human rights as a pretext to interfere in countries' internal affairs.

Sino-Japanese East China Sea Row

16. Questioned by a number of Japanese correspondents about the reported notice posted on the China Maritime Safety Administration website March 1 prohibiting most ships from entering an area surrounding the Pinghu gas field due to an expansion project, Qin stated that the notice contained a "technical inaccuracy." China's actual operations are not being conducted in this area, Qin said, referring to the area also claimed by Japan. Beijing, however, does not recognize the median line unilaterally established by Tokyo and expresses dissatisfaction with Japan's objections based on this claim, as well as Japan's exaggeration of the issue. Because China is not operating in a disputed area but rather totally within Chinese maritime territory, it was not necessary to inform

Japan of the project. Responding to whether this incident could affect bilateral ties, Qin remarked that while the matter stemmed from a technical inaccuracy, reinterpreting or playing up the issue could create further problems.

UN Sanctions on Sudan

17. Asked by the Spanish News Agency correspondent about the recent decision by China and Russia to block UN sanctions on individuals involved in atrocities in Darfur, Qin maintained that China wishes to resolve the issue by promoting negotiations. Beijing hopes the parties will strive to reach a comprehensive settlement by the end of April.

SCO Membership

18. Asked about by the Reuters and AP correspondents about reported plans for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to grant SCO observer countries, including Iran, membership during the June SCO Summit in Shanghai, Qin stated that the SCO maintains an open attitude toward expanding its membership but is presently focused on internal development and strengthening cooperation among its current members. While further discussion on accepting new members is necessary, all SCO members are now concentrating on ways to enhance the role of SCO observers. Qin said that he has received no information about certain observer countries (i.e. Iran) expressing interest in full membership, adding that the SCO has not established any legal procedures for absorbing new members. SCO countries will take many things into consideration in deciding which countries to invite to the Shanghai Summit.

Upcoming Visits

19. Qin announced that Finnish Prime Minister Vanhanen will visit China April 25-28. Vice President of Sierra Leone Berewa will visit China April 23-27.
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